



LUIS OCHOA, THE DESERT SUN

Shannon Farar-Griener gets ready for a recent run along South Palm Canyon Drive. Farar-Griener is competing in the Badwater, a 135-mile Death Valley race, today.

## When you want to stop, go on

### Former valley resident runs today in 135-mile race

BY LEIGHTON GINN  
THE DESERT SUN

Like most people in the Coachella Valley, Shannon Farar-Griener was complaining about the 108-degree weather.

Unlike most people, Farar-Griener was complaining it wasn't hot enough.

A resident of Hidden Hills who was born in Palm Springs, Farar-Griener drove

**Do these** into the Coachella Valley hoping the temperature would reach the 120s so she could run close to 20 miles.

Sound crazy? Probably. For Farar-Griener, it is a necessity.

Farar-Griener trained to compete in the Badwater, a 135-mile ultramarathon in Death Valley that takes about two days to complete

in extreme heat that can reach as high as 180 degrees on the sizzling pavement. The race begins today, with Farar-Griener scheduled to start at 8 a.m. The race will be televised on Badwater.com.

A combination of Forest Gump, the Energizer Bunny and the Heat Miser from the Christmas cartoon "The Year Without A Santa Claus," Farar-Griener has an affinity for running and dealing with heat, which helped her become the first woman to complete the double at Badwater, which was 292 miles.

In the real world, Farar-Griener is a mother of two and has her own Website, [www.ultrashannon.com](http://www.ultrashannon.com).

It was after the birth of her first son that Farar-Griener got the idea of starting to run.

Farar-Griener was struggling to lose the extra weight from her pregnancy, and saw the L.A. Marathon while channel surfing.

"I was wondering why anyone would want to run 26 miles," Farar-Griener said.

The next day, Farar-Griener was flipping through

**Please see RUNNER, C5**

# Runner

Continued from C1

a running magazine and saw an ad with a girl suffering from leukemia. The ad was about a leukemia-raiser for the girl.

The Leukemia Society provided a coach for Farar-Griener after she volunteered to run.

Farar-Griener started slowly, building up her mileage near her house. After a while, she was no longer in her neighborhood.

"My neighbors would call and say, 'Was that you I saw running in Northridge when you live in Woodland?'" Farar-Griener said.

In 1995, Farar-Griener completed her first marathon and was hooked.

She had found her passion.

Soon Farar-Griener noticed that by the 20th mile, while other runners were struggling or hitting a wall, she started feeling good.

"I thought 'OK, there has to be something beyond 26 miles,'" Farar-Griener said. "I have to feel bad. That's part of it, right?"

At a 50-mile run, race officials told Farar-Griener she needed to consider running Badwater.

"I said no way was I going to run 135 miles in that desert. Are you crazy?" Farar-Griener remembered. "I had a five-hour drive and I was thinking, 'Badwater. I've done 100s, I've done this and I've done that. I might as well try it.' It's the ultimate in the sport of ultramarathons. What's your fantasy goal? Badwater."

First, Farar-Griener ran as a pacer for a friend who finished seventh. By running parts of the course, Farar-Griener got a feel for the territory and an itch to try Badwater herself.

Farar-Griener trained, which included trips to Palm Springs during the peak of summer. When Farar-Griener got to Badwater, she got another proposition.

"They said, 'Shannon, why don't you run the double? You'd be the first woman.'" Farar-Griener said. "I said, 'Shouldn't I do it one way first?'"

## Tips on running ... and running

**Shannon Farar-Griener's things you need before you consider running Badwater, the 135-mile race through the extreme heat of Death Valley.**

**1. Deal with the heat:** Because temperatures at Badwater can reach as high as 180 degrees on the surface, it's important to get your body to adapt to the heat. Farar-Griener said when she picks up her kids from summer school, she'll turn on the heat in the car and wait an hour. Competing at Badwater, Farar-Griener said she will go through three pairs of shoes, as the surface will melt the soles of her shoes.

**2. Run — A lot:** Log in a lot of miles. "If things don't go as planned, that's just bad luck, but if you don't train enough, that's your fault." It's probably best a person has at least completed a marathon.

**3. Break down the race:** Running 135 miles sounds daunting, but Farar-Griener said it's important to break down the race into segments so you're achieving several mini-goals throughout the race. She breaks down her race by checkpoints and landmarks.

**4. Have a good crew:** These are the people who help pace, man the checkpoints, help provide water, wraps, and salt pills. They also provide motivation, with slogans like 'Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.' or 'It's mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.'

A chance to become the first woman to double Badwater, however, was too tantalizing.

Farar-Griener went for it, and made history.

It took Farar-Griener six days, and she did it with a total of less than six hours of sleep.

During the race, Farar-Griener hallucinated, seeing Martians, UFOs, cowboys and lava in the cracks of the pavement. She also had to overcome bloody blisters and other ailments.

Although Farar-Griener can joke about the trials and tribulations of being an ultramarathoner, it can be a dangerous sport.

At one 100-mile event, Farar-Griener came close to death.

With a bad stomach, Farar-Griener tried to run the 2004 Angeles Crest 100, in the Los Angeles area.

During the race, Farar-Griener passed out several times.

When people found Farar-Griener, she was delirious. Eventually, Farar-Griener's husband Alan rushed her to the hospital, where she needed three IVs of fluids.

"The emergency room doctor said 10 more minutes and I would have gone into cardiac arrest," Farar-Griener said. "I thought I

had finished the race. I said, 'I did good, huh?'"

The Angeles Crest race shook up her husband.

"That was a bad decision on her part. She had a bad stomach and didn't drink fluids for three-to-four hours," Alan Griener said. "That was an eye opener for us. She has a responsibility as a mother and wife when she does these races, she has to maintain her health. ... One of the problems I have, they're willing to push the limits of health and well being, beyond what is suitable for her husband and kids."

Although concerned, Alan Griener said he still supports his wife in her endeavors as one of her biggest fans.

"I wish she would have figured this out as little girl because she could have been in the Olympics," Alan Griener said. "How many people at 32 years old figure out they can run 100 miles?"

"I love running and I love getting to an ugly place and to get out of it and see I can get out of it," Farar-Griener said. "I love hurdles, and I love Badwater because it's constant challenging. ... I think it validates me. There are no limits in life."